

PREPARED STATEMENT OF AJIT PAI
NOMINEE, FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION

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Chairman Rockefeller, Ranking Member Hutchison, and Members of the Committee, thank you for giving me the opportunity to appear before you today. I am grateful to you for taking the time out of your busy schedules to consider my nomination to the Federal Communications Commission. I appreciate as well the many courtesies you have extended to me during this process. I have enjoyed my meetings with you and your staff, and if I am fortunate enough to be confirmed, I look forward to continuing our productive dialogue.

I also would like to thank Senators Roberts and Moran for their very kind introductions. Their support has been as gracious as their service on behalf of the people of Kansas has been outstanding.

Last but certainly not least, I would like to thank the President for nominating me. I am humbled by the honor. If confirmed by the Senate, I will do my best to be worthy of the privilege of serving the American public in this capacity.

With the Committee's indulgence, I would like to introduce members of my family who are in attendance. Supporting me today and all days are my wonderful wife, Janine; my son, Alexander, who turned three months old this past weekend; my mother and father, Radha and Varadaraj Pai; my mother-in-law and father-in-law, Marianne and Bob Van Lancker; my brother-in-law, Bob Van Lancker; my cousin, Dinesh Pai, and his mother, Meera Pai; my cousin, Vaishali Kamath, and her husband, Praveen; and members of my extended in-law family, Janet and Rod Gaumer, Deborah Nicholson, and Agnes Butsko, the last of whom may well be the most technologically savvy of all of us at eighty-something years of age. I also wish to remember my late grandparents, who never could have imagined that their sacrifices and those of their children would culminate in this proceeding, a world and a century away.

As my last comment suggests, I am the child of immigrants. My parents came to the United States from India exactly 40 years ago with about \$10 in their pockets, a willingness to work hard, and a strong belief in the American dream. In the late 1970s, they moved to Parsons, Kansas. Parsons is a town of about 10,000 people located approximately 150 miles south of Kansas City. After settling in Parsons, my parents began serving the community as doctors at the county hospital. They still work there today. My sister, Sheila, and I received quality educations in the local public schools. I am glad I grew up in rural Kansas. The friends I made and the experiences I had gave me a valuable perspective on life, and I have grown to appreciate that perspective ever more as I get older.

As a child, I remember having a bulky telephone, which was connected by a thick wire to a jack in the wall. It was expensive to make long-distance calls, especially to relatives abroad, so our conversations were efficient rather than expansive. I recall that we only could choose among three channels on the manual dial of our television. Cable television was not available, but we ultimately got a satellite dish installed in our back yard. The dish was approximately 10 feet across. With it, we could watch non-broadcast programming if we typed the channel coordinates into a set-top box and waited a minute or two for the satellite to reposition itself. We had ready access to just two newspapers: the local daily, which usually covered national news with snippets from wire reports, and a paper devoted to agricultural issues. In sum, the products and services offered by the communications industry, as far as I could tell from my youthful vantage point, were rather limited.

Suffice it to say of today's communications landscape that we are not in the Kansas of my childhood anymore. We see convergence as cable, telephone, satellite, and wireless companies compete against each other to provide traditional and novel services. We see an explosion in content, and the development of new and faster ways for people anywhere in the world to access that content. We see personal communications devices that are more powerful than computers that once filled up a room.

Perhaps the best concrete example of innovation in communications is the smartphone that I routinely carry in my pocket. On this one platform, I have watched videos of television shows, read not just articles from various national newspapers but entire books, and listened to radio stations from across the country. The device also has allowed me to do things that either didn't exist back when I was a child or have

nothing necessarily to do with communications. For instance, I have emailed and sent text messages to my friends and family. I have taken pictures and created videos of my son, and immediately have shared them with people as far away as Australia. I have navigated the roadways, bought airline tickets, made restaurant reservations, and even installed a cabinet using an application that turns the device into a leveler. I – and perhaps you too – usually take functionalities like this for granted.

But can you imagine my reaction had I been handed this device three decades ago? I and most Americans surely would have been astonished by the full range of communications technologies that consumers enjoy today. These technologies have made our lives better, richer, and in some cases, even longer. For this, the private sector deserves the lion's share of the credit. After all, companies and entrepreneurs took risks. They raised and invested capital. They brought new products and services to market. And they created millions of jobs along the way. But it also is important to recognize the role that the nation's premier communications agency, the Federal Communications Commission, has played in this technological revolution. When it has prioritized competition and innovation, the FCC has allowed the private sector to deliver to the American people rapid, efficient, nationwide communications services at reasonable prices – the very charge Congress gave the agency in the first section of the Communications Act of 1934.

Speaking of 1934, a prominent national newspaper that year profiled the very first Commissioners to be appointed to the FCC. The title of the article referred to them as “Rulers of the Air.” Were I fortunate to be confirmed to the same position, my ambition would be far more modest. I would not bring an ideological mission to the agency. I would hold no favor for or prejudice against any particular company, segment of the industry, or technology. On each matter presented to the full Commission, my approach would be the same. I would study the record closely. I would stay within the boundaries of the Commission's authority, as set forth by Congress. And I would work collegially with the Chairman, my fellow Commissioners, and agency staff to come up with solutions carefully calibrated to solve problems. My aim would be to help the FCC establish a regulatory framework that enables the communications sector to achieve even greater heights.

My decision-making process also would reflect a respect for those outside the agency with an important interest in the FCC's work. I would seek to build a collaborative relationship with Congress, including the members and staff of this

Committee. Having worked in the Senate, I will bring to the Commission a firsthand understanding of and appreciation for congressional prerogatives. Similarly, I would consult as appropriate with the private sector, executive branch agencies, consumer groups, state and local governments, and others impacted by the Commission's agenda. A good Commissioner must be a good listener, and if confirmed, I will do my best to make sure that I hear what all stakeholders have to say.

In discharging my responsibilities, I always would be mindful of the implicit goal of communications policy: to maximize the benefits of competition and innovation for all American consumers, whether they live in a big city or rural Kansas. Or to put it in more personal terms: to enable my son to marvel, when he is my age, at just how far communications services have come in his lifetime.

Chairman Rockefeller, Ranking Member Hutchison, and members of the Committee, thank you once again for affording me an opportunity to testify today. I look forward to your questions.